



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 5  
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD  
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

**WU-16J**

**JUL 31 2003**

Chairman Eugene Bigboy, Sr.  
Bad River Tribal Council  
P.O. Box 39  
Odanah, Wisconsin 54861

Dear Chairman Bigboy:

The purpose of this letter is to formally recognize the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa for their progressive ground water protection efforts. Specifically, the Bad River Natural Resources Department (NRD) sought EPA's assistance to plug abandoned drinking water wells on tribal lands and then obtained funding to develop an ongoing program to continue this work. These efforts enable you to protect your underground sources of drinking water from contamination by these abandoned wells now and in the future.

Private household and other drinking water wells whose use has been permanently discontinued can pose a health risk to persons who use nearby drinking water wells. These abandoned wells can become a direct pipeline for contaminants at the surface to reach underground drinking water sources if the wells are only temporarily sealed, or are improperly plugged. Surface runoff containing fertilizers or animal wastes, flood waters, or even small spills can cause significant contamination of ground water if it drains into an abandoned well. There is also the potential for underground discharges from septic systems to flow through abandoned wells into deeper drinking water sources. Abandoned wells can also pose a safety hazard to children and pets.

A representative for EPA's Underground Injection Control Branch, Dean Johnson has trained Bad River NRD technicians and worked with them to properly plug abandoned wells starting in 1998. Dean assisted the Bad River NRD to develop its own program to plug abandoned wells. In 2002, the Bad River NRD received a ten year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue this effort. It is noteworthy that hands-on training by Dean and tribal technicians was provided this year to NRCS program managers. Since this effort began, twenty three private abandoned drinking water wells have been plugged. We specifically wish to acknowledge the dedication and hard work provided by Bad River NRD staff members Matt Eitrum, Kirsten Cahow, Jamie Ekholm, and Alissa Dickerson, under the leadership of Manager Ervin Soulier, who accomplished this significant ground water protection effort.

We applaud the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa for taking the initiative to develop your own tribal well closure program. Congratulations on this special effort to protect human health by safeguarding underground drinking water sources from contamination by abandoned wells.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sally K Swanson".

*for* Jo Lynn Traub  
Director, Water Division

cc: Ervin Soulier, Manager  
Kirsten Cahow  
Alissa Dickerson  
Matt Eitrum  
Jamie Ekholm